



THE CRYSTAL-GAZER

BY MARY S. WATTS

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT NORTH ROAD," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK A. NANKIVELL

THE carrier's cart—for my means afforded no more lordly style of travel—set me down at an elbow of white highroad, whence, between the sloping hills, I could see a V-shaped patch of blue, this half water and that sky; here and there the gable of a farmhouse with a plume of smoke streaming side-wise; and below me, in the exact point of the V, the masts and naked yards of a ketch at her moorings. Even in that sheltered harbor, to judge by the faint oscillations of her masts, she felt the tug of the waters around her keel. There had been a storm the night before; without, the sea ran strong about all these exposed coasts; and I knew that, hidden from sight behind the upper headland, the surf must be bursting in a cloud over the Brown Cow, and the perturbed tide setting like a mill-race between that great dun rock and the shore through the narrow gut we called the Cat's Mouth.

"You'll be noticing some changes, Mr. Nick?" the carrier hinted at last, lingering to observe me. "Well, there's a deal may happen in two or three years. You can't look to find things just the way you left 'em."

He used a certain respectful familiarity, having known me all my life, and, as he spoke,

eyed me with the kind and open curiosity of a dog. He was a gentle little man, with a manner oddly compounded of the sailor's simplicity and the rustic's bootless cunning,—for he had followed both walks in his day,—and was popularly held to be somewhat weak-witted since a fall from the masthead to the decks of the brig *Hyperion* some years before.

"I am not near enough to see any changes yet, Crump," I answered him. "The changes, if any, show most, I dare say, in myself."

"So they do, sir; so they do," he assented heartily. "My wife used to say you were a pretty boy, and had the makings of a fine, personable man. First thing I thought, when I clapped eyes on you to-day, was: 'Well, this here's a lesson to Sarah not to be hasty in her judgments!' 'Tain't often I get the better o' Sarah, you know, sir. They tell me you've been in Italy and learned to paint?"

"I'm afraid I haven't quite learned all the art yet, Crump. It takes more than two or three years."

"Depends on the person, I shouldn't wonder," he said, wagging his head. "Some people are slow by nature. Could a man make his living by it, d'ye think, sir?"

I answered this devious inquiry as to my own financial standing by assuring him that I had

contrived so far to make mine. "I'm not riding in my coach-and-four yet, as you see, Crump, but the time may come."

"I'm sure I hope it will, Mr. Nick," he said rather dubiously. "But it's kind o' tempting Providence, seems to me. You might 'a' been walking your own quarter-deck, captain o' some tall East Indiaman by this, like your father and grandfather before you, making a safe, easy living, and looked up to by everybody."

I interrupted his moralizing to ask, as, indeed, I had already done more than once, without being able to get his attention: "How does my grandfather seem?"

Momentary gravity fell upon him. "He — he don't always answer the helm, Mr. Nicol," he said, and touched his forehead with a meaning look. "Barring that, I'd rate him seaworthy, for all he's cruised so long — nigh eighty year, ain't it?"

"I'm glad I came home," I said, concerned. "The old man should not be alone."

"He ain't exactly alone," said Crump, with an uneasy glance into my face. "He's signed on two new hands here lately — about a month ago, I b'lieve. I dessay he was making pretty heavy weather of it by himself, and so he — er — well ——" He cleared his throat, hesitating in an odd embarrassment; he plainly felt that here was information bound to be distasteful, and set about imparting it with a painful diplomacy. "The cap'n — Cap'n Pendarves, your grandfather, sir, was, as you might say, short-handed, you being in foreign parts, and old John Behenna having slipped his cable 'long about the last o' May, as I was telling you; and so the cap'n he ups and ships these here — and — and, in fac', Mr. Nick, one of 'em's a woman!" He drew a long breath and wiped his forehead.

"You don't mean he's married!" I shouted, and with, I am afraid, a pretty strong term of disapproval.

"There, now, I *thought* you'd take it that way!" Crump remarked, not without gratification. "But it ain't so bad as that, Mr. Nicol." And he went on to explain, with a variety of nautical metaphors, that the couple, an elderly man and a young girl supposedly his grandchild, had appeared in Chepstow some weeks ago during fair-time; that the young woman "took observations," which I translated to mean that she told fortunes, supporting them both, it would seem, by the pennies she gained this way, for the man did no work, and was most often seen "hove to, transshipping cargo," at the bar of the Three Old Cronies or elsewhere,

Crump said. He did not know how or when or where my grandfather had first fallen in with these vagabonds. For several successive days he had been noticed in their company, or laying a straight course for the little booth wherein the girl plied her mean trade; and then, all at once, to the stupefied astonishment of Chepstow, — where the captain was reckoned, with reason, a particularly hard, sour, dour sort of body, anything but friendly or hospitable, — the pair of them were discovered comfortably installed beneath the Pendarves' roof, as snug as if they had lived there all their lives and never meant to go away! The thing was a mystery; it went near to being a scandal. For a final touch, Crump assured me that these precious gentry were all but nameless; no one had ever heard the woman called anything, and the man's name defied pronunciation.

Upon all this agreeable intelligence, we parted, as Crump's way was by the round-about hill road, while I struck straight across by short cuts to my grandfather's house. If I had been content to loiter on the path heretofore, no amount of haste could satisfy me now. I doubt if any honest artist lad returning to the place of his birth after three years' absence ever met a grayer welcome. I had left my grandfather unimpaired, and it was well-nigh impossible to figure that harsh and domineering spirit in decay. Abram Pendarves belonged to the ancient hearty, savage race of British sea-captains, now fast waning to extinction. After a youth of wild and black adventure under the rule of just such salt-water despots as he himself became, he had spent some two score years practising the tyrannies and what one may call the brutal virtues he had learned on every sea and beneath every sky this planet owns; then came at last to settle down in the storm-beaten house on the cliffs by Chepstow (the house his father's father had built), whence he could see the surf whiten on the rocks and gulls forever circling about the Brown Cow. His was a narrow and surly old age, not overwell provided, for he had never been a thrifty man; and he found among the rattletrap furnishings of his neglected home one living chattel quite as worthless — a weird, lean goblin of a boy, his sole descendant, fatherless and motherless, playing lonely little games in corners, making crass drawings with a charred stick on the walls, and viewing the blossoming orchards of spring with a crazy delight in color. I fear there was not much affection between this ill-matched couple. For long years I saw in my grandfather only a coarse, violent old man, niggardly and censorious. And to him there

was doubtless something unwholesome and repellent in the most innocent of my tastes; I could not even sin roundly, like other boys, by pilfering or truantry, but must display an exotic passion for reading forbidden books, an abhorred dexterity at caricature. I think we were equally headstrong and unreasonable, I in my young way, he in his old one; and as I trudged along the quiet homeward paths, it shamed me to remember with what hard words we had parted.

II

THE sun was going down as I conquered the last steep rise toward my grandfather's gate. Hereabouts a pair of steps had been cut into the cliff and a hand-rail erected to help the visitor against the wind, coming, as it so often did, in flaws of extraordinary force and fury around the headland. From this high point a great expanse of ocean filled the eye, and the ceaseless, uneasy

rumor of water assailed one even in the fairest weather. There was always a thin run of surf about the base of the Brown Cow and among those narrow conical rocks which, set in a rough crescent near the lower end of the Cat's Mouth, had not inaptly been named the Cat's Teeth.

The path followed the edge of the cliff on the hither side of a stone wall, behind which some few experienced old apple-trees bent and flattened themselves into strange, tortuous shapes to escape the winds. The inclosure went by the name of orchard, though it was in truth little else than a wild jungle of weeds and rubbish; but one tree in the most sheltered corner yearly made a conscientious effort to supply us with a bushel or so of pippins, and adventurous Chepstow urchins as regularly defeated the hope. I purposed to shorten my road by crossing here; and so, finding a toe-rest in certain familiar crannies of the masonry, clambered easily to the top of the wall, and paused there a moment,



“YOU DIDN'T SEE THE SIGN, I SUPPOSE?”

astride of the coping, to put aside the branches and take a distant view of the forlorn pile of ruins I called home. It was a dreary place; its roofs sagged, its chimneys leaned at perilous slants. Yet my heart warmed to the sight of it. I took hold of the stoutest bough to swing me to the ground, when —

"Don't touch those apples, young man!" said somebody sharply.

I was so startled as nearly to lose my hold, and came down with a run and hands well scored on the rough bark. There I stood, knee-high in rank undergrowth, staring all about in a surprise that must have been not a little ludicrous, for the voice uttered a short cicada-chirrup of laughter, shrill and sweet.

"Here I am. What bats men are!" it said.

I looked. She was standing almost immediately beneath the place where I had climbed over; my boot must have grazed her. She was what old women call a slip of a girl, in a cotton gown, white, figured with fine sprigs of green sadly faded, for it was not new. The wind whipped her red hair into her eyes. Her face was very much freckled; properly speaking, it was one freckle from brow to chin. She wore, besides, as I remember, a little muslin tucker (I think the garment is so named) and a little frilled muslin apron; and these articles, together with her old print frock, were washed, starched, and ironed to a degree it hath not entered into the mind of man to conceive. I took off my hat; and something about this young woman moved me thereafter hastily to adjust my cravat and shirt-ruffle. I believe these signs of perturbation (which were entirely genuine) pleased her in some subtle way, like a tribute, for she stopped to inquire: "You want to cut through here to the highroad? I'm very sorry, but I really cannot allow it. I've had a great deal of trouble keeping the village boys away from this tree. These are fine apples and good winter keepers — that is, I think they are —" she added a little tentatively, searching my face. "You didn't see the sign, I suppose?"

I followed her gesture and beheld, nailed aloft on the stub of a dead tree, a square of white planking whereon was neatly lettered the legend:

NO TRESPASSING UNDER PENALTY OF
THE LAW

ABRAM AND NICOL PENDARVES, PROPRIETORS
PER MARY SMITH

"I did it myself with a red-hot poker," she said proudly.

I gazed from her to the sign-board, all but

speechless. "It's very well done," I managed to get out at last.

"Yes, isn't it? But, somehow, it doesn't keep the boys from coming. They're not at all law-abiding. I don't think they've been very well brought up. And then, of course, they're not accustomed to seeing any one in charge here." She looked around, and smoothed her apron with the most astonishing little air of resource and command. "I saw a bill with the names at the bottom that way, and per So-and-So below, so I copied it," she continued, surveying her handiwork fondly.

"Ah? You are Miss Mary Smith?"

"Yes." And now she looked at me, and away again, with a strange and sudden flush. "Yes, *Smith*. That's — that's a very good name, I think." There was a kind of tremulous defiance in her tone, as if she half expected me to question it.

"I've heard it before, I believe," said I stupidly — for, in fact, I had scarcely yet got myself together. "You live here?"

She nodded, with a perplexed and inquiring eye on me. "I'm Captain Pendarves' housekeeper," she said, with a prim and bridling air, and once more her expression challenged me. "Deny it if you can, sir!" was evidently her unspoken thought.

"And how long has my — ahem! — has Captain Pendarves been employing you, may I ask?" I said, wondering that Crump had not prepared me for this as for the other changes.

"Young man," said Mary Smith severely, "I have no time to stand here answering idle questions. If you want to see Captain Pendarves, I will speak to him; but if not, I really think you had better be getting on, for it's late."

"I was thinking of stopping awhile," said I humbly, "with my grandfather. You see, I'm Nicol Pendarves."

Had I said, "I am the Prince of Darkness," the announcement could not have wrought a more appalling change in her. She fell back a step, putting out one faltering hand to the wall for support. Her small bullying mien vanished like a garment twitched from her shoulders by unseen magic. Her face blanched piteously; terror looked from her eyes. "Oh, I was afraid of this!" she gasped, in a voice that went to the heart. "Sir, I — I — meant no harm!"

"Harm!" said I, both touched and puzzled. "Why, you've done none. There is no need for excuses. I never saw a better steward; you did not know me, and you were within your rights to send me about my business."

"Sir," she said, still in a tremble, "I have

done no wrong. You will find everything just as you left it."

"I shall find everything in a good deal better case, judging by what I've seen already, I think," said I heartily. "How long have you been here?"

"Four weeks — next Wednesday," she answered nervously.

"Then," said I, "maybe you can tell me something about the drift of things here. For — not to boggle about it — I am in some uneasiness, Miss Smith. These people — this man and woman who I hear have settled themselves upon Captain Pendarves of late — who are they? what are they?"

As I spoke we emerged upon the stone-paved walk leading to our kitchen door; it had been picked free of weeds, and the currant-bushes on either side trimly harnessed up to a set of stakes. A white curtain flounced behind the old lattice; there was a row of flowering geraniums in pots upon the sill. Through the open door you might see a clear fire and Mary Smith's saucepans glowing on the wall. The place, I thought, wore, for a kitchen, the best air conceivable of decent and humble dignity; nor would one have supposed that mere thrift and cleanliness could be so comely. I turned to her with some such words, and found her facing me, so much of haggard trouble in her eyes that I stopped, aghast.

"Sir," she said, twisting her fingers, "I see you do not understand — I thought you knew. I — I am the woman you speak of. Your grandfather is within, and the other — the man — with him."

III

OUR old house being designed and built with a shiplike compactness, there was but one room on the ground floor besides the kitchen and its offices. It was a plain, comfortable place, wainscoted about, with shelves and lockers in the whimsical copy of a vessel's cabin. And it contained the single work of art our establishment could show; that is, a portrait of my grandfather's grandfather, — he who founded this house, — in a finicking attitude, with a brocade coat and a pair of compasses. In his rear were to be seen a pillar and a red velvet curtain, and (distantly) a fine storm of clouds and lightning. Never was a respectable old sailorman so misrepresented; but all his descendants except one regarded this gaudy daub with almost religious veneration. Every family has its one great man; the admiral was ours. His was the distinction of being the only Pendarves who had ever managed to amass a

fortune. It had dribbled through the fingers of succeeding generations; but there was a tradition that some part of it, buried or otherwise secreted with an admirable forethought by the old gentleman, might yet be discovered, to the further glorification of our house.

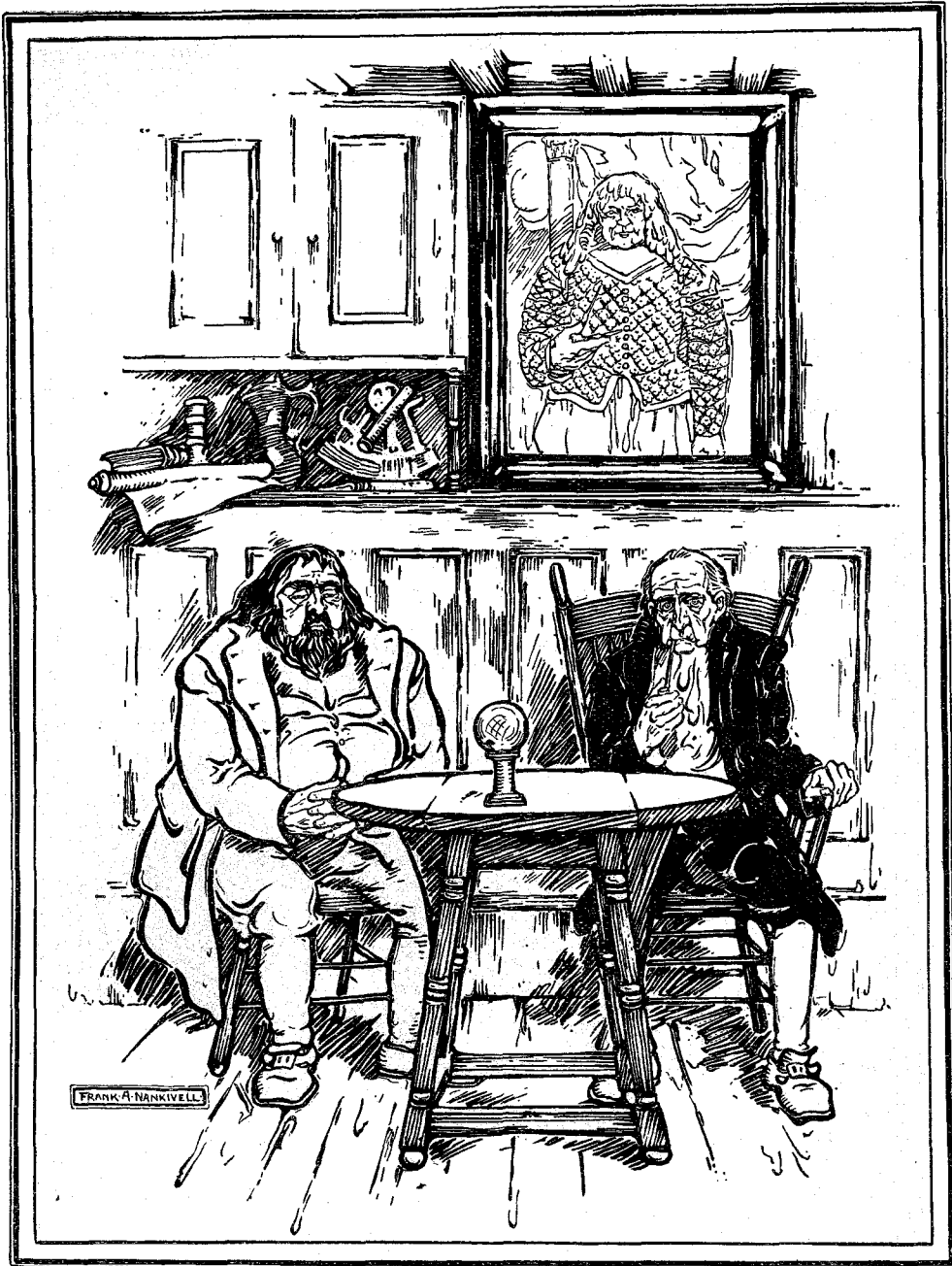
The picture hung directly opposite the door, favoring me, as I entered, with a disconcerting smirk; it needed no great stretch of fancy to credit him with cherishing some secret and villainous joke. Beneath it sat my grandfather, with his pipe, in the same place and attitude as I remembered him for upward of twenty years, but so spectral a likeness of himself that the sight of him shocked me like a blow. He had wasted to a mere parchment envelop of bones, and the eyes he turned to mine were bright with inward fever. I had looked for I do not know what signs of an unstable mind, but at first, save for the eyes, saw none. He showed only a not too well pleased surprise.

"Nicol!" he said, and pushed back his chair, without rising. "Nicol!" and then for a moment sat staring closely at me under his heavy brows. With his next action something of the horror of his affliction came home to me, for I saw that, but for some confused sense that I had been absent against his will, he had utterly forgot everything concerning me, the terms of our last meeting, and the events of many years besides.

"Hush, and sit down!" he said, in the habitually chiding tone he had used to the boy of ten or twelve. "Take your books and get your lesson!" He pointed with the stem of his pipe to a stool in the corner where, as a lad, I had passed more than one grim hour, and turned to his companion, as older people turn from the interruptions of children.

Mary Smith, following behind, touched me gently on the arm. "Go and sit down," she formed the words with her lips rather than voiced them.

There sat beside my grandfather a vast, fat creature with a forest of greasy black hair and beard about his pallid face; his heavy hands lay motionless in his lap, forcibly reminding me of an image I had seen of some Oriental god upon his throne. His eyes were scarcely opened, his breathing was almost imperceptible; a gross animal content appeared in him as of a full-fed, lethargic crocodile. Side by side, he and the gaunt, fierce-eyed old man presented no mean allegory of spirit and body. A table was before them, and in the middle of it a toy the like of which I had never seen in this house or elsewhere — a globe of crystal, perhaps the size of an orange, held up on a little bronze pedestal. The fat man's eyes, or so much of them as one



"THE FAT MAN'S EYES . . . WERE FIXED UPON THIS THING WITH A KIND OF STUPID INTENSITY"

might see, were fixed upon this thing with a kind of stupid intensity; one could have fancied him paying tribute to some idolatrous shrine. The captain watched him with an equal earnestness; so might the Roman mob have hung upon the reading of the sacred entrails; and there was about it the air of a well-practised, familiar rite. At last my grandfather asked:

"What do you see?"

The other's lips moved, and an unintelligible whisper reached me.

"Ay, that's it, that's it," said the captain, and sent a quick, searching look about the room. "Doublons — pieces-of-eight — Spanish pillar-dollars — doublons, doublons! That is what it would likely be made up of, eh? But where — try to see that — where?"

Another interval of silent gazing, and the

oracle uttered some further statement, which my grandfather received with an impatient groan.

"Doubloons — piles of gold — I know!" he said. "And a ship. But whereabouts was it, eh? Surely you can see whereabouts it was?"

"It's all a mist; I can see nothing," the other answered, after a pause.

I could have found it in me to laugh at the whole miserable hocus-pocus, had I been less indignant. The situation was, besides, sufficiently grave; and as I listened to this silly and profane juggling, and observed the wildness of my grandfather's bearing, it became plain to me that he could not long endure such an influence. I guessed from his talk that the old man's disorder was based upon the idea of treasure lost, sunk, or hidden hereabout; for our coast was dangerous, a menace to vessels, and not innocent, besides, of smugglers and worse. Perhaps the poverty of his later years was at the root of his delusion; perhaps his madness would have taken this form anyhow. However he had fallen into the fat man's hands, this was the secret of the latter's power. While I pondered gloomily, the sitting (so to call it) came to an end. Perhaps my unwelcome appearance somewhat contracted it. My grandfather lapsed into his chair, his chin on his chest, brooding. Excitement died in him almost visibly, like the flickering down of a spent fire. Instead of eighty, he looked a hundred and eighty, and his face was as lifeless as a mummy's.

"Zaira!" said the fat man, raising his thick lids (but I fancied he had already taken some shrewd peeps at me from under them), "I have slept, and the spirit has spoken. Arise! take away the mirror of Time and Space!"

And hereupon the girl, advancing with a shamed glance at me, carried the globe to one of the lockers, shoved it in, and slammed the door on it savagely.

"Have a care!" the seer warned her somberly; the mirror of Time and Space, apparently, was not immune from the ordinary risks of mirrors, as one might have expected so august an instrument to be. When speaking aloud thus, he used a great rolling, sonorous voice; it filled the room until the very window-panes vibrated.

She gave him a look of angry rebellion, opened her lips as if to retort with some stinging word, stood irresolute a moment with eyes that wavered between the three of us, then walked off, leaving us sitting facing each other in silence.

The fat man and I exchanged a long stare, I choking down my temper, he smooth and

placid, to outward seeming, as the idol he resembled. The resolution with which he stuck to his silly pose was, in its way, a rogue's masterpiece; nothing more exasperating than this stolid effrontery was ever devised. The scoundrel feared, and yet knew he had, in a sense, the better of me; the helpless old man between us was his shield.

"Young man," he said at last, in the same booming monotone, "have you the gift of the seeing eye?"

"I have more the gift of the feeling fist, I think," said I, with what calmness I could muster. "If you doubt it, sir, I shall be pleased to show you. I am Nicol Pendarves, as a soothsayer like yourself will have guessed already. Perhaps you will honor me with your name and business here?"

"Many names are mine," he answered, and made a solemn gesture. "Many names are mine —"

"Doubtless," I said; "but I meant your *last* alias."

He went on, unruffled, in his great voice, as if I had not spoken: "Many names have been mine through the uncounted eons — many names. In this flesh men call me Constantine Paphluoides."

It was no wonder Chepstow could not turn its tongue about that name; that and his manner together must have dumfounded our straight-thinking townspeople. I do not remember — indeed, I took no pains to note — what else he said; bits of mythology, history, poetry, rolled from him in a cataract of meaningless noise. Had I been an ardent disciple sitting at his feet, he could not have feigned a greater exaltation. The fellow was at once dull and crafty; he loosed this gust of windy rhetoric at me as if he thought to win upon me by mere sound and fury signifying nothing.

I got up at length, when I had had enough of him, and, walking across to where he sat, "Mr. Constantine Paphluoides," said I, "this is my house; I give you until to-morrow morning to leave it; you will go quietly and without any formalities of farewell. You will find it expedient to obey me; otherwise, although I have not consulted the mirror of Time and Space, I should not be surprised if it revealed you, to the seeing eye, in the town jail and later in the stocks."

He made no answer, but sat staring at me, blinking, and opening and shutting his mouth in a gasping fashion like a fish. I had striven to speak quietly, but (being in a breathing heat of anger) must unconsciously have raised my voice, for unexpectedly, and, as it were, for a warning, my grandfather came out of his semi-

stupor and straightened up, eying me over with a kind of wandering severity.

"Nicol, go to bed! You hear me? Go to bed!" He reached, cursing, for his cane. There was a grotesque familiarity in the act. With that very cane he had sought to coerce me into the straight and narrow road, as he conceived it, how many times during all my childhood!

"Go to bed, I tell you!" he screamed, and half rose, brandishing his rod of correction.

Somebody pulled at my sleeve; it was the girl. "Please come away, Mr. Pendarves; please do come away, sir, just for a minute, and then he'll forget it," she urged; and, with her earnest air of responsibility: "It's so bad for him."

IV

IN the kitchen, Zaira Mary Smith was getting supper ready, as it appeared. I followed her out passively, and sat down in a sort of maze. It seemed incredible that, amid the shabby tragedy of this household, there should be time or thought for the kindly business of spreading a meal. The girl marched briskly to and fro, stooping to the oven door, tinkling softly among her spoons and bowls, evidently taking a timid zest in her labors. It made her seem the most sane, assured, and stable person among us, spite of her position. I could have imagined her singing as she went, had it not been for my presence. She was desperately conscious of me, watching me askant



"GO TO BED, I TELL YOU," HE SCREAMED, AND HALF ROSE

with the curiously commingled fear and trustfulness of a child. Nor, notwithstanding the untruths or half-truths she had told me, could her connection with the abominable rogue-fool in the next room appear other than an enormity — as if she might be the enchanted heroine of some fairy-tale, condemned to the service of a monster. At last, when she came and laid a board and pan on the table beside me, and, rolling up the sleeves about her capable, round little arms, began a severe maltreatment of a batch of dough, I could keep silence no longer; curiosity crowded every other feeling out of me.

"Mary Smith!" I burst out, "for God's sake, tell me all about it!"

She rested her hands on the edge of the bowl an instant. "About us?" she said, with a quick glance at me. She gave the dough one or two perfunctory pats and punches, biting her lips; and then suddenly, with a rush of color, her face puckered together, she clapped her befloured hands over it, and fell on the nearest bench in a perfect whirlwind of sobs.

"I — I — I w-w-wanted to be respectable!" was all I could make out between gasps — but that was staggering enough news, I thought. She wanted to be respectable!

She went on: "I didn't come here of my own free will, Mr. Pendarves, truly I didn't; but when we came, and I saw how nice I could make it, — and I never had a home before, — I knew, if you ever came back, that would end it all, and I did so hope you wouldn't!"

"It seemed a pity not to make hay while the sun shone?" I suggested.

She nodded, a little doubtfully. "I didn't think of it just that way," she said. "But — yes, I suppose any one would put it so. Only — I haven't hurt anything, Mr. Pendarves; I — I only scrubbed — and cooked — and cleaned a little. I was so happy; there was no harm, it seemed to me. And when I pretended to be the housekeeper, that — that was just a little game I played with myself; it was silly, I dare say, but, after all, it did no harm, either. It was like another game I play by myself sometimes — of having a birthday, you know? I put little things I've made beside the bed, and when I wake up in the morning, I make believe it's my birthday, and I'm so surprised at all the presents I've got! It's silly, isn't it? I knew you'd laugh."

"I never felt less like it," I said. "Don't you know your real birthday?"

She shook her head. No, she did not know that. She had never known anything about her father and mother. She was not even certain of her own name. "He calls me Zaira," she said, with a scornful jerk of her

auburn head toward the other room; "but that's a stupid name, and I hate it. I tell every one my name's Mary Smith. Why not? I might as well call myself what I like — nobody cares. I think Mary Smith's beautiful, don't you? It's so respectable, isn't it?" she added wistfully.

Of her childhood she could remember nothing but being in some sort of school or institution (a home for foundlings, most likely) governed by nuns, or at least by women who went about in black stuff dresses and white caps, and whom one called *ma sœur* — for this was in southern France, she thought. The life was clean, decorous, and peaceful, and she might have grown up to wear a white cap herself, and herd little waifs into chapel; but when she was probably ten or eleven years old, the fat man came and took her away, and they had been wandering up and down the world ever since. He said he was her uncle, but she was no more sure of that than of anything else concerning herself.

When they had been in Chepstow a time, she said, her uncle came into their fortune-telling booth one day with Captain Pendarves, whose name she did not then know. He talked a great deal in an excited way about finding some treasure — "money I think he said his father or grandfather had hidden a long while ago. He kept saying it would all be in 'doubloons, doubloons,' because it was got in the Spanish Main and brought here in a ship. And he said there was treasure, heaps of it, in the bottom of the Cat's Mouth, where ships had sunk, gold pieces all in amongst the ribs of dead men. Mr. Pendarves," — she looked at me with a shy, awed sympathy, — "I saw your grandfather was — was —"

"He is crazy, or nearly so," said I. "Plain talk is best."

"I'm afraid so. I thought shame to beguile a poor old man that way, but, sir, I could not stop it. He came every day, and they looked in the crystal — just as they were doing this afternoon, you know. He's worse now; I think he forgets betweenwhiles what was said the last time they looked. Then, one day, he told me we were to come here to live. It was wrong — I knew it; but when I saw it, and thought what I could do — and I did so want to have a home and — and be respectable — and I thought, too, if I worked hard and made it nice, it would be a — a kind of payment, wouldn't it? I couldn't help longing to —"

"Don't cry that way," I said. "I can't bear to see you cry."

"I can't help it," she sobbed. "It's so hard to leave it all."

"Well, then, why leave it?" said I. "He has to, surely; but that need make no difference to you. We must have a housekeeper, you know."

She gave me a woeful glance; and I understood that, according to her poor little code, it would be more "respectable" to resume her journeyings with the fat crystal-gazer than to stay in the house with Nick Pendarves as his grandfather's housekeeper. Here was a ticklish point to argue with her; and, for all her tears, there was a firmness in the set of her chin (it was dented with a dimple) that warned me such argument would be a waste of time. She had made up her mind, and would stand to it at all costs. It was martyrdom in an eminently feminine style; women deliver themselves up to it day by day, and contrive to be perfectly unreasonable, yet somehow in the right. She wiped her eyes presently, shut her mouth on a sob, and went resolutely about her work. We had, after all, a tolerably cheerful evening in the kitchen. It seemed wisest for me not to show myself again before Captain Pendarves, but I am afraid I did not repine greatly at the banishment. As the door swung to and fro behind Mary carrying their dishes, I caught glimpses of the gloomy parlor, my grandfather huddled in his chair by the table, with bright, roving eyes; the sorcerer surprisingly busy about the food for a person of his ethereal habits; and, on the wall beyond, old Admiral Pendarves simpering eternally over his private fun.

V

THE wind came up strong again after sunset, and all night long went noisily about the gables, and piped down our trembling old chimneys. It did not lessen with the approach of morning, and when I thrust open the window, an hour or so after dawn, there was a low-hanging gray sky and a great, driving stir in the air. I had hardly pushed the casement out, had one brief vision of bare tormented trees, felt a slap of rain, and heard, not far away, the measured beating of breakers as they charged at the foot of our cliff, when the wind, plucking the latch from my grasp, slammed the lattice and went yelling around the corner of the house like a jocular demon. I began to dress, thinking, as I had often thought before, that the place had a kind of fantastic kinship with the sea; every timber in it seemed to strain and creak to the repeated onsets of the storm, like those of any ship. The house stood steady enough, yet our position, open to all the winds of heaven, and within a few hundred paces of the furious water, was surely such as none but a sailor

would have chosen. We rode out the weather in the open, so to speak, with abundant sea-room. And, for the better carrying out of the simile, there presently arose, somewhere outside, a long, drawling hail, calculated, with a mariner's nicety, to overcome the wind. "Ah-o-oy! The house, ah-o-oy!"

It came from the landward-looking or high-road side of the house — about two points on the starboard bow, as old Crump would have said. And, in fact, when I reached the door, there was Crump himself huddled in a pea-jacket on the seat of his cart, with his gray pony drooping dolefully between the shafts. I could just see them above the ragged hedge that divided our little front yard from the public way. Towering columns of rain swept across the landscape; Crump and the pony looked soaked to the core; and I was admiring the Spartan devotion to duty that brought him out at this hour, in such weather, when he began another wailing like a castaway banshee: "Ah-o-oy, the house! Pendarves, ah-o-oy!"

I set a hand to either side of my mouth and roared an answering hail to him up the wind. We were a bare twenty yards apart, but if he had not chanced at that moment to look in my direction, I doubt if he would have been aware of me, for all my efforts. The wind, in a fresh swoop, snatched the sound from my lips and ranged through the house with a turmoil of banging doors, falling crockery, and wildly fluttering draperies. As it was, he caught sight of me, shouted something unintelligible, and gesticulated toward a formless heap tucked up in oilskins behind him in the cart. Then he descended laboriously and signaled for help to remove it.

"What is it? What has he got?" screamed Mary Smith in my ear. She must have come running from the back of the house at the recent outburst of racket. Her petticoats swirled; her red curls streamed (they were shining with wet). She had certainly been outdoors already, as early as it was, in the teeth of all this blow, and I was startled by the pale anxiety of her look. "What is it? Who is there?" she cried again shrilly.

"Nobody but Crump with my baggage," I cried back. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, Mr. Pendarves, haven't you seen them? They are both gone! I've looked everywhere about the house. They were gone when I got up, and I can't find them high or low!"

"You mean Captain Pendarves — and the other?"

She nodded, with terror-struck eyes on me; then, raising on tiptoe, screamed painfully, with

her mouth close to my ear (it was almost impossible to hear otherwise): "He — your grandfather — has done it before. He's always restless in a storm. He goes down to the shore sometimes. I'm so afraid —" her look said the rest.

"Ask him — ask Crump; maybe he's seen them," she added in a shriek, as I started to the carrier's help. It was but a few steps to the gate, yet I reached it wet through, half blinded by sheets of water driven slantwise in my face, and with the breath nearly beaten out of me. In the open, thus, the storm seemed to increase tenfold in violence; it filled the vast cloudy hollow of the sky with reverberating din; and I felt, or fancied I felt, the solid ground shiver with the pounding of the waves on the ledges along the Cat's Mouth.

Crump greeted me with a cheerful grin; he had all the seaman's tolerance for the vagaries of the weather.

"Coming on to blow some, ain't it?" he remarked at the top of his lungs. "Your old apple-tree's carried away — that one in the corner of the orchard, I mean. I could see it as I came along by the upper road."

"Have you seen my grandfather anywhere about?" I shouted.

He could not have understood the question, for he answered, squinting up at me knowingly as he stooped over his end of my chest: "I see you got rid of *him*, Mr. Nick, and in short order, too. I spoke him a little way back, bound for Sidmouth with all sails set — at least, he was laying a course that way. Come on board, ma'am!" He pulled his forelock and made a leg respectfully before Mary (albeit eying her with no small interest) as we shoved our burden through the door. The girl clapped it shut, with a sharp struggle against the draught, and in the momentary silence that followed we stood awkwardly and apprehensively surveying one another, while the hurricane rumbled outside.

"I asked you if you had seen my grandfather," I said to Crump, at last.

"Seen the cap'n? Why, no, sir," he said, surprised. "I was telling you I saw —" He stopped, with a glance at Mary.

"Yes, go on. You saw *him*? Where? What was he doing?" she said sharply.

"I was saying he crossed my bows laying his course for Sidmouth, or that way," said Crump, evidently striving for a witness-box exactness. "He didn't answer my hail. Looked like he was in too much of a hurry."

Mary cast a troubled look about. "Did he have anything with him? A portmanteau, or carpet-bag, or anything to carry clothes?"

"Not that I noticed," said Crump carefully.

"Looked as if he was going out in ballast — except his pockets; there was something in his pockets, I should say."

I stared at Mary in some perplexity. What the fat man did, or what should become of him, were, indeed, matters of indifference to me, except so far as they concerned her. I was well enough pleased that he should go, but there was something unusual in the manner of his going; it was a headlong flight. To tell the truth, I had looked for further trouble with him. What would the girl do now? And where was Captain Pendarves? She met me with eyes at once frightened and resolute.

"First of all we must find Captain Pendarves — we must go look for him," she said, answering my thought and making up my mind for me in a trice. (She has a way of doing this, displaying the most unerring accuracy at it any time these twenty years!) And, in the turn of a hand, she had kilted up her skirts, tied a shawl over her head, and was making for the kitchen door.

"Lord love you, miss, you can't go out in this!" said Crump, aghast.

"Why not? I've been out in it once already."

"But, Mary!" I cried, and tried to withhold her. "What good can you do? Here is Crump, and here am I. We'll find them both. This is no work for a woman. You are wet; you may get hurt —"

"And you?" she retorted. Then, in a lower voice, "Don't stop me, Mr. Pendarves; don't try to keep me from going. I can't stay quietly here, and wait, and wait, and not know what's happened. I think I should go mad. I *must* go. You are wasting time; your grandfather — oh, can't you understand?"

I understood only that she was frantic with anxiety, and might have offered further remonstrance had it not been for the sudden defection of Crump. He edged a little nearer, and gently jogged my elbow.

"I'm with ye, miss," he announced, with startling alacrity; and, as we followed her out, he explained to me in a hoarse and perfectly audible whisper behind one hand: "I'm always with 'em when they get that look on, Mr. Nicol. Catch me adrift on a lee shore! I've learned a lot since I signed with Sarah."

The breakfast-table had been laid, and the empty chairs stood around it in their places, under the smiling supervision of the admiral's portrait. In the kitchen, Mary had a bright fire going, her neat towels hanging to dry. She opened the door, and the next instant this pretty and comforting picture was shut behind us, and there we were crouching in the rain under the eaves, with the wind bellowing overhead.



FRANK R. HANKIVELL

“IT LAY BEFORE US, A CONSIDERABLE HEAP OF GOLD AND SILVER COINS, TARNISHED BUT RECOGNIZABLE”

Mary stood on tiptoe again to scream: “I’ve been all over except in the orchard — you can see the shore from there.”

I took her hand within my arm, and we struggled forward. As we drew nearer the cliff, the loud and awful noise of breakers in the Cat’s Mouth silenced the storm; yet the wind was no whit diminished. A man could hardly have kept his feet, I think, along the cliff path. Before we reached the corner where the ancient tree that had weathered so many gales lay prostrate, uprooted at last, although we had as yet no view of the immediate shore, we could see a white aureole of spray hang, vanish, and return in a breath, yards in air above the Brown

Cow. We fetched a compass around the orchard, stumbling and staggering among stumps and matted weeds and half-hidden logs without finding my grandfather, or any trace of him; and Crump having dropped behind, we had lost sight of him when that eery screech he adopted to make himself heard traveled to us down the wind. He was kneeling by the dislodged roots of our old tree, and, as he caught my eye, began an uncouth pantomime of surprise and wonder; then stooped, grasped a handful of something, and held it aloft with extravagant gestures. He bawled again, and, having got closer by this time, I heard the words:

"Doubloons, Mr. Nick! Pieces-of-eight! Spanish dollars! Doubloons!"

"Heaven help us all!" went through me. "Here's another gone mad."

The spectacle put our search momentarily from my mind. I knew Crump's head to be none of the strongest, and I should never have guessed what had actually happened—for surely this was a strange place and way in which to stumble upon old Admiral Pendarves' treasure!

Yet that was what the carrier had done; he was never saner in his life. It lay before us, a considerable heap of gold and silver coins, tarnished but recognizable, in a rotting wooden keg sunk into the ground at the foot of the tree and partly meshed in its roots. Crump plowed among the coins with his hand.

"There's a morn't of money here, Mr. Nicol," he said, "and there's been more. Look, here's some of it scattered out in the grass; it couldn't have got away out there of itself. And here's a footprint in the mud." He looked up thoughtfully. "Likely some of it's on its way to Sidmouth now," said he. "I thought his pockets bulged."

"Well, I wish him joy of it!" said I.

"Lord, you could have the law on him for that, Mr. Nicol. Ain't you going to?"

"Not I!" said I, holding Mary's hand.

Something in this attitude must have moved Crump to his next remark. He looked us both over with an impartial and dispassionate air, cast a calculating eye on the treasure; then, "Enough left to get married and set up on, anyway," he said weightily. "There's worse things in the world than being married—though you'd hardly believe it. That's what I often says to Sarah!"

At that Mary Smith snatched her hand suddenly from mine and moved toward the edge of the cliff, crying out that we must continue our search. I climbed the orchard wall and looked along the shore. Here the cliff dropped away almost sheer, and the narrow

strip of shingle at its base was lost in the surf. Farther to the north it widened a little with the curve of the shore, and through a swaying curtain of rain I could follow it to a point we called the Notch, near the entrance of the Cat's Mouth; of late years they have dredged the channel and moored a bell-buoy off this headland. There was nothing alive in sight; some prone black objects I saw, with a start, were only a few fisher-boats drawn up on the sand, and none too safe. I looked out to sea; the tide was making, and, where the strait drew in toward the Cat's Teeth, the waves fought and clamored with a horrid vigor, like living monsters. Their huge voices outdid the winds, and, as one after another made forward, towered, and broke upon the reefs, the Teeth disappeared in a welter of foam. Hereabout we found the old man at last.

Where he had got a boat, or with what madman's strength he had launched it, we could not guess. It was midway of the Cat's Mouth that I first caught sight of him, at no great distance measured by feet and inches, but as far beyond human aid as if the wide Atlantic had separated us. He was standing up in the stern, with folded arms, in something the posture he may have maintained on the poop of his ship in old days—where, perhaps, he fancied himself at this moment. I trust that reason was withheld from him in the utter hour; and certainly, although I could not discern his features, I saw him make no gesture either to invite help or to indicate that he had any understanding of his position. If mad, I thought (right or wrong) his death thus less ignoble than his life had become; if sane, he held a strong and steadfast heart, and bore himself well on his last voyage. By some strange chance, the boat spun and tossed among the breakers, yet kept an even keel, and boat and man together made a viking end. For, so standing, unconscious or unmoved, he went down, before our eyes, between the white and pointed reefs of the Cat's Teeth.





BOB, DÉBUTANT

BY HENRY GARDNER HUNTING

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DENMAN FINK

Of course, Bob knew that, as an abstract ethical principle, it is wrong to fight. His mother had been endeavoring to impress that idea upon him, from the moment it was first decided that he should go to public school till his books and his lunch-box were packed and he was on his way thither; and she had succeeded fairly well, for she had exacted a promise from him faithfully to avoid personal encounters as wholly sinful and unbecoming.

As a matter of fact, Bob knew only so much about fighting as he had learned through round-eyed, somewhat frightened observation of a very few entirely bloodless encounters among older boys; and, inasmuch as he had found himself consistently excluded from nearly all other, more peaceful pursuits and interests of these older ones, it was not unnatural that he should feel merely a spectator's interest in their fistic battles also, and that he should look upon them as he would have looked upon any other natural phenomenon—with some excitement, perhaps, but with no personal concern.

Bob admired his mother. To him, she was the most beautiful and the most resourceful woman in the world. He had found her judgment upon many subjects so wise that he was quite prepared to believe her position in this matter (which did not appear to be vital) completely and unquestionably correct, and to promise accordingly.

But conditions which exist on the big, bare public-school playgrounds, away alike from parental restraint and parental protection, are quite different from those in the home doorway, and the code which obtains in the ward-school world is not an open book to all mothers of chubby-fisted sons who are called upon to observe it. It seems difficult for mothers to comprehend that a normal boy's standing on the school-ground is, like that of a young cock in a barn-yard, simply a matter of mettle and muscle.

So it was as early as Bob's second day at school — on the first Papa Jack had gone with him — that a revelation came both to him and to his mother. To him it was a painful revela-